

Resource Protection Area (RPA) Guidance for Sight Lines

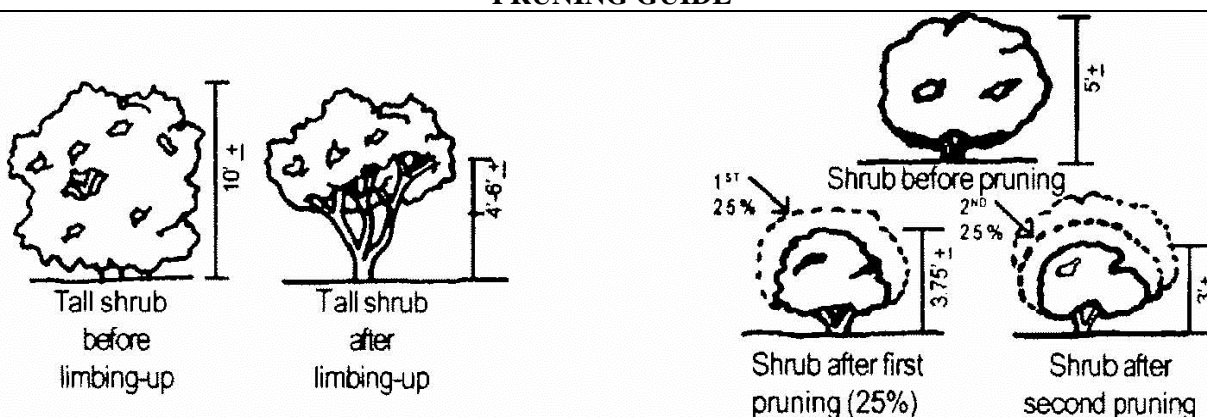
In order to maintain the functional value of the buffer area, existing vegetation may be pruned or removed, subject to approval by the local government, only to provide for reasonable sight lines, access paths, and general woodlot management. A sight line request is a permitted buffer modification requiring administrative approval of a Chesapeake Bay Exception (CBE). In addition to the requirements within the County Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance (Chapter 23 of the County Code), the following requirements shall be applied to all requests:

1. The applicant must be the actual owner of the property.
2. Considerations for sight lines are only permitted after a house is constructed and occupied.
3. A Sensitive Area Activity Application form along with the required fee must be submitted.
4. A photograph and/or site plan depicting the approximate location of the sight line footprint and the location of the proposed tree(s)/shrub(s) to be pruned, limbed up, or removed should be submitted with the application.
5. Requests for the removal of trees or shrubs may require submission of a replanting plan. Replanting shall be required at a 2:1 ratio for each tree/shrub removed.
6. Replacement trees and shrubs shall be native species with trees being a minimum of 1" - 1-1/2" caliper and 6' - 7' in height and shrubs shall be a minimum of 3-5 gal container size and 18"- 36" in height.
7. A surety may be required to guarantee the replanting.

OWNER STEPS TO CREATE SIGHT LINES

- Choose a sight line from the house to the water.
- Select vegetation for pruning.
- Prepare plan for pruning, removal and restoration.
- Mark vegetation proposed for pruning or removal.
- Notify local government for site visit and plan review.
- Receive local government approval prior to any action in the buffer.
- Prune or limb up trees and shrubs per approved plan.
- Remove approved vegetation.
- Replace woody vegetation per approved replanting plan.

PRUNING GUIDE



PRUNING

- Prune shrubs down to a minimum of 3' or limb up
- Do not remove more than 25% of any plant at one time to assure plant survivability.¹

Chapter 3, Riparian Buffers Modification & Mitigation Manual, Virginia DCR 2006

**A GOOD SIGHTLINE
CLEARING**

- Achieves a filtered view through vegetation.
- Retains all trophic layers.
- Replaces any removed vegetation with woody vegetation of equal value.
- Uses appropriate native vegetation.

**THIS!**

Example of a good sightline towards the water. All trophic levels are retained, yet a clear framed view of the water is achieved.

**UNACCEPTABLE
PRACTICES**

- ✗ Clear-cutting any area within the buffer.
- ✗ Removal of a complete trophic layer.
- ✗ Removal or disturbance of groundcover, be it vegetation, mulch, leaf litter, or woody debris.
- ✗ Conversion of groundcover plants or leaf litter to lawn.

**NOT THIS!!**

Entire understory and groundcover has been removed. The woody vegetation has not been replaced.